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SUBJECT: NGOs, EDUCATION, AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: BUILDING CIVIL  
SOCIETY IN GUILIN AND LIUZHOU

GUANGZHOU 00000075 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (U) Summary: The Consul General's February 1-3 visits to Guilin and Liuzhou focused on developing civil society through strengthening NGOs and forming educational partnerships. The CG visited Guangxi Normal University officials and librarians, as well as administrators of the Liuzhou Minority High School to discuss our mutual desire to expand bilateral educational and cultural exchanges. He separately met with two influential NGOs -- Xingyu Special Education Center in Luizhou and the Golden Phoenix Foundation in Guilin -- to learn more about their innovations to spread educational opportunities to disadvantaged communities. The CG commended them on their success and underscored that civic engagement at the grassroots level as one of the most effective means to produce lasting change. He also visited the Flying Tigers Heritage Park under construction near Guilin, where the World War Two-era American Volunteer Group fought battles to defend Guangxi; he expressed appreciation for local efforts to protect and promote our common histories. In both Guilin and Liuzhou and despite bilateral frictions, the local Foreign Affairs Offices demonstrated a significant willingness to strengthen partnerships and advance common goals. Liuzhou's active sister city partnership with Cincinnati is one apparent reason for local receptivity. Surprisingly, the trip received unprecedented Chinese media coverage in Guangxi and beyond. End Summary.

Promoting Education and Cooperation  
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¶2. (SBU) The CG's visit to Guangxi Normal University and Liuzhou Minority High School February 1 and 3, respectively, emphasized the effectiveness of building bridges through education. Guangxi Normal University is the second largest university in Guangxi Province and has over 40,000 students. Vice President Cai Changzhuo, a published expert on American Studies, stated that the school hopes to become a premier international institution. Cai expressed excitement about President Obama's call to have 100,000 American students studying in China, said Guangxi Normal hopes to house a large number of those students, and announced they are expanding their international student center to accommodate more students. Guangxi Normal sends 10 students a year to study in the U.S. The CG emphasized the importance of these exchanges and welcomed the call for more outreach between the university and the Consulate. The school also

was enthusiastic to establish an American Corner.

13. (U) During the visit to Liuzhou Minority High School, the CG met with school administrators to discuss the uniqueness of their institution and how they are using education to transform their community. Ethnic minority students comprise 47% of the school's population. The curriculum is mainstreamed but includes several bilingual and a few minority-focused courses. The high school asserts its university entrance rate is 94%. For half a century the school educated only women; in 2007, males were admitted. The school's outreach programs still address the unique challenges that some students, particularly young women, must face. For example, one minority group has a custom that women drop out of school and marry at the age of 16. The school has launched a fairly successful public outreach campaign to persuade these women to finish high school and possibly pursue higher education. Today 600 students apply each year to enter the school and are able to pay educational costs with a mixture of government funding and outside donations. One of the key contributors to this donation effort is the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, since Cincinnati and Liuzhou are sister cities. Each year Cincinnati also sends 10 student volunteers to teach oral English during the summer. The CG commended their efforts and strong Sister City relationship, stating that he looked forward to strengthening cooperation.

Bottom Up: NGOs Build Civil Society in Guangxi...

14. (SBU) The CG commended Xingyu Special Education Center Chairwoman Peng Nianxiu for her groundbreaking work helping children and families affected by autism. Xingyu (literally "language of the stars," might connote "Special Stars") was established in August 2004 to help children diagnosed with autism and their families. Chairwoman Peng was inspired to found the center when her own son

GUANGZHOU 00000075 002.2 OF 002

was diagnosed with autism, stating it took nearly six years for her son to be properly diagnosed and even then resources were scarce. Xingyu is the first autism-intervention service in Liuzhou: in total, nearly 60,000 inhabitants of Guangxi Province are affected by autism. The center faces many challenges, such as sufficient financial resources as well as a stable and qualified staff. The center will soon relocate to a new government-sponsored rehabilitation center--proving it positively affected public opinion and won government support for its service.

...and Guilin

15. (U) The Golden Phoenix Foundation in Guilin is another example of how local engagement can bring about effective change. Golden Phoenix founder Luo Ping said his mother, a teacher in a rural village, inspired him to start a program to encourage young, rural women to pursue higher education. Golden Phoenix strives to transform the lives of young women by exposing them to a broader world, focusing not only on education, but also civic engagement and volunteerism. Stable funding is a chronic issue for this small and new NGO, but they work with local government and international organizations to keep the organization active. The CG agreed to investigate ways in which the Consulate can partner with Golden Phoenix to provide more outreach and programming to their students.

Flying Tigers: Fight for Freedom a Common Cause

16. (SBU) The CG visited the construction site of the future Flying Tigers Heritage Park to be built on a site where the Second World War-era American Volunteer Group fought battles to defend Guangxi. There he also met with local representatives to discuss the history behind the location and plans to build a proper memorial to honor the service of the Chinese and American heroes who served. On his visit, the CG focused on the history the U.S. and China share and how this common history can help China and the U.S. increase mutual understanding and address shared goals today. CG Goldbeck applauded efforts to protect Flying Tigers' history, noting the sacrifices of

both our nations to preserve freedom. The project is set to be completed in two years.

#### Media Reaction Exceeds Expectations

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17. (SBU) The CG's trip to Guilin and Liuzhou garnered the most media coverage in recent memory of any Consulate Guangzhou programming outside of Guangzhou city. To date, 106 articles have been published and estimated readership/audience is about 700 million. Most coverage focused on the CG's visit to and remarks about the Flying Tigers Heritage Park, as well as IPR cooperation (reported septel).

#### Comment: A Positive and Continuing Partnership in Guangxi

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18. (SBU) Comment: The CG's trips to Guilin and Liuzhou apparently touched a chord with local audiences despite recent frictions over arms sales, the Dalai Lama, etc. Part of the success could also be attributed to positive comments regarding local IPR cooperation and to local receptivity to American tourism in Guilin (reported septel), in addition to building upon broader existing positive people-to-people connections. Guangxi is relatively poor and less frequently visited, two factors which perhaps add to its receptiveness. Contrary to the typical hesitancy frequently encountered at other institutions, the Guangxi University's administration immediately expressed interest in an American Corner and openly acknowledged that the only obstacle to an American Corner would be provincial-level resistance. End Comment.  
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